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## THE IMPROVIDENCE OF NURSES

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The reasons for improvidence in nurses, whether they are or are not improvident, may be given in abundance and without apology, since human nature is not held in monopoly by our profession. Nurses are often women who have left home where, though they have had much comfort, they have had no definite income. The confined and financially meager life of the training school brings them, as a natural consequence, to the verge of impatience towards constant restriction of expenditure. When their first case comes, often directly after graduation, the compensation probably seems to them as a rich vein of gold does to a hard-working miner who had followed directions that took him through fatigue, cold, hunger, anxiety and utmost endeavor. That he should begin to economize as soon as the "lead" began to "pan out" would be expecting more than experience warrants. A nurse, furthermore, is often thrown with wealthy people, and if she is young, the pretty and dainty ways of living appeal to her senses, and often hypnotize her common sense.

Again, after a difficult and trying case, she feels sometimes that as she has worked hard for this money, she has a *right* to use it as she likes, at the moment. This is the reaction from strain, and should be regarded as such; reactions are not to the normal, but a little beyond.

The reasons for improvidence cover the whole gamut of youth, temperament, and environment. The last is the most potent factor in the final result, though we hate to admit it, but if we know our danger, it is half overcome.

The nurse who thinks will not lose her perspective. The nurse who has learned self-control, will not loiter in the foreground of her landscape, because the distant hills seem so near. Her thought has told her that they are not; her self-control will make use of her knowledge.

Food, pleasure, raiment, uncertainty, may be taken as the names of roads along which improvidence lures the thoughtless nurse. How many spend unnecessary money on candy and allied forms of indulgence, forgetting the rainy day. Pleasure, we almost hesitate to mention, as poor nurses need pleasure, and get less than their share, usually; but no doubt there is a certain per cent of waste along this road. To all may be said then, go to the play or the opera, the movies, or the baseball game, but let each one, according to her own standard, remember the temperate limit, and the unavoidable future.

Raiment is the great temptation to half of our sisterhood. Self-respect and vanity are twins, and look very much alike, though so different in char-

acter. The nurse who is absolutely and pridefully indifferent to her appearance makes a mistake, of course, but the nurse who thinks too much about it, makes a greater, for she forms a habit of indifference to what may happen in the future, if she has what pleases her in the present, and too often draws the poisoned robe of Nessus over her shoulders, in the guise of exquisite, but ephemeral, chiffon, a type, we may say, of thriftless self-indulgence, which clings to its victims, even when they wish to be rid of it.

Uncertainty of income is a factor to be considered as producing improvidence, seemingly from two standpoints, first the necessity of dealing in futures, and secondly a fluctuating abundance, which seems to have a subtle influence towards wastefulness. This may be evolved from some law of reaction, but whatever the reason, it is formed very frequently. Its recognition is the first step towards a cure.

We know, in a general way, that extravagance is relative, what would be extravagance in me might be economy in my patient, and this approaches the second topic, how a nurse should save.

Much as we admire erratic genius, and flashing, dashing people, greatly as we long to be thought "sulphetic," and laugh knowingly at the "bromides," the large, calm fact is, that method and order accomplish; erraticism, flash and dash usually fail.

Imagine the success of a machine whose bolts and braces slipped into unexpected places, and whose levers were not coincident to their fulcrums! Order and method should be the nurse's handmaidens in her professional work. She is wise who continues their service in her own private attendance. A nurse who conducts her finances with order and method is not likely to be improvident. It is like the golden rule in morals, one who treats his neighbor as himself is not likely to kill him, or defraud him. The nurse who apportions her income along certain lines, and does it methodically, will soon come to a sense of just estimates. Be it understood we do not mean by "apportioning her income," saying casually she will only spend "five dollars a month on amusements," or "four dollars a month on charities," etc., etc., but a careful plan of her expenditures, with relation to her income. Whatever amount she makes yearly, she must not spend that much. We will not lay down any cut and dried rules of saving one-tenth, one-third or one-half of her income, there will be lean and full years to almost all.

We would suggest that each nurse adopt a course of living as absolutely simple as health, cleanliness, and immaculate neatness will permit. This suggestion partakes of the austere, but we believe it has a double virtue, material and spiritual, touching the rock foundation of character. In this, as in everything else, there is the factor of personal opinion. To one, fine linen in place of velvet will mean simplicity, but the rule is the

thing for each one to work out her own problem by, and what is the rule? Can it be given without circumlocution? We think one word will do, that word is, restraint. Let her who loves to spend, spend less, not on one thing, but on everything. Let her who spends aimlessly, consider carefully before each expenditure. Let her who spends hastily, eliminate hurry during her purchase. There is some danger in this of fostering, or even creating, a parsimonious spirit, but the woman who learns to hold in her rampant nature, through mental direction, acquires knowledge and the capacity to urge to proper exercise the grudging or lazy elements in it.

Finally, why should a nurse save, more than should any other self-supporting woman? Because the very fact of being a nurse threatens her power to long continued self-support. The bookkeeper, the stenographer, the clerk, if successful at all, may normally look forward to increased importance in her special field from the momentum of experience and its acknowledged value to the business world. Her life may seem monotonous, but the technicalities once mastered, the tone of her work grows calmer and smoother as time passes. She need fear nothing but time itself.

The trained nurse, though also benefited by experience, has to pay so tremendous an indemnity in vital energy that her stock in trade, her health, is constantly being drawn upon. The nature of her work, while demanding at times immense outlay of physical and mental effort, prevents regularity of rest and the relaxation so necessary to such conditions of strain. Therefore, she should save especially for the emergency or for the enforced relinquishment of her labor.

There is another phase belonging to the life of trained nurses, which should also inculcate providence, the superaddition of recruits. Annually and semiannually, fresh and well-equipped members are added to the profession. It is impossible for a large force to be as fully employed as a small one in a given area, and youth, all things being equal, must forge ahead. The experience we are so jealous to proclaim is sometimes of a kind to regret. A vivid young graduate might even call it "a rut." We who are near the summit of the hill are not as young, we do not see as clearly, we do not know as many new things. We are sometimes handicapped by what we *do* know! We should save during that upward climb, for the nurse's day of life is short and the burden of that day is often heavy and the heat fierce. It is well for her, indeed, that she should, early in the morning, take thought of the haven she will seek when her evening begins to fall.